

Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness
on Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket

Community Needs Assessment 2022 Annual Update

This document (the “Update”) provides a brief annual assessment of our progress towards preventing and ending homelessness on Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket (Cape and Islands). It responds to the findings in our Community Needs Assessment (the “CNA”), last published in 2019, includes the most recent housing and service use data, and offers a brief analysis of changes to overall system capacity. The authors have included new insights from partners on the YYA Committee and the Youth Action Board (YAB).

Overview

In September 2019, Barnstable County Department of Human Services (BCDHS), in partnership with Matthew Aronson Consulting, published [*Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness on Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket: A Community Needs Assessment*](#). They analyzed quantitative data from multiple systems, conducted interviews and focus groups, and collected information through a community survey. Stakeholders included Youth and Young Adults (YYA) with lived experience of homelessness and housing instability, service providers, and community members representing a range of geographies, perspectives, and experiences. Stakeholders offered their insights and helped to co-interpret preliminary findings before the authors produced a final report with eight key findings.

1: As many as 2,400 YYA may experience some form of homelessness over the course of a year, but the number with high needs may be much smaller	5: Small social networks, stigma, and a lack of awareness suppress identification, prevention, and intervention
2: Homelessness affects vulnerable and minority populations disproportionately	6: YYA voices are largely absent from decision making
3: The lack of year-round affordable housing puts pressure on housing stability for YYA	7: Regional differences <u>and</u> similarities matter
4: There are several service-related gaps that may leave YYA with unmet needs	8: The Cape and Islands do not have a system designed to prevent and end YYA homelessness

The CNA also identified two recommendations for next steps:

1: Create a YYA Workgroup within the Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness.	2: Include YYA at risk of, and experiencing, homelessness in all assessment, planning, and implementation processes.
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In January 2022, the Cape Cod and the Islands Regional Network on Homelessness (Network) approved the completion of an annual update to the CNA. This is the first annual update and so will include quantitative data collected since September 2019.

CNA Key Findings

1. As many as 2,400 YYA may experience some form of homelessness over the course of a year, but the number with high needs may be much smaller

Update

In CY 2021, HMIS includes 56 households led by YYA. In FY 20, 130 unduplicated YYA received services through the State funded Unaccompanied Homeless YYA grant. 147 YYA received services in FY 21.

2. Homelessness affects vulnerable and minority populations disproportionately.

Update

Of the 56 YYA households captured in HMIS in CY 2021, approximately 21.4% identify as Black/African American and 9% as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander or Multiple Races. Approximately 9% identified their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino.

Of the 130 YYA who received services through the State grant in FY 20, 14.6% identified as Black/African American, 2% as American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 6% as “Other.” 9.2% identified their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino. 10.7% identified as LGBTQ and 5.4% identified as either transgender or gender non-conforming.

Of the 147 YYA who received services from the State grant in FY 21, 14.9% identified as Black/African American, 2.7% as American Indian/Native Alaskan, and 10.9% as “Other.” 3.4% identified their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino. 7.5% identified as LGBTQ and 1.3% identified as transgender. No individuals identified as gender non-conforming in FY21. 5 out of 28 YYA (~18%) who transitioned to stabilized housing identified as LGBTQ.

In 2019 and 2021, the CoC conducted an analysis of racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness, access to and utilization of services, and service outcomes, using HMIS, MA YYA Grant, CES, and 2021 PIT data. The 2021 report found the largest demographic disparity among those identifying as “Black or African America” in terms of persons served and total enrollments. They were also significantly over-represented in Family Emergency Shelter. The report detailed outcomes by project exit destinations, and Black participants achieved a higher rate of Positive and Neutral Outcomes than their percentage of enrollments and a lower rate of Negative Outcomes.

In response to the percentage of Persons of Color accessing the family shelter system, the 15 Emergency Housing Vouchers received by the Cape and Islands were extended to families in shelter.

3. The lack of year-round affordable housing puts pressure on housing stability for YYA.

Update

In FY 19, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) over \$113,000 to provide 6 beds of permanent supportive housing (PSH) for YYA. That funding is part of the community’s annual Continuum of Care (CoC) program with an expectation that it will be reviewed annually, including adjustments based on regional Fair Market Rents.

In 2020 and 2021 BCDHS funded Duffy Health Center to provide temporary housing to YYA in inclement weather or other emergencies in which YYA are unable to access existing temporary housing resources. During the winter months, Champ Homes offered temporary housing for up to two YYA 18-21 who are unable to access motel resources due to Massachusetts law.

In 2021 BCDHS and Homeless Prevention Council initiated planning for a Host Homes program on the Lower/Outer Cape with an expected launch date for placing YYA by June 30, 2022.

4. There are several service-related gaps that may leave YYA with unmet needs.

Update

The Network adopted the use of the TAY-VISPDAT assessment tool for all heads of household under age 25, regardless of family composition. The TAY-VISPDAT is specifically designed for YYA and accounts for risks and vulnerabilities unique to this population. For example, it calculates the impact of why a YYA is housing unstable, whether running away from family/group/foster homes, affected by differences in religious or cultural beliefs from parents/guardians/caregivers, or forced to leave family or friends as a result of conflicts around gender identity and sexual orientation.

Increases in State grant funds since FY 20 has allowed the community to serve YYA who might have otherwise been ineligible for traditional homelessness services. For example, eligibility for the state funded YYA Homelessness grant uses a definition for at-risk YYA that allows for a larger number of YYA to qualify for services than is prioritized for CoC funded programs.

BCDHS currently has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Dept. of Children and Families (DCF) and Falmouth Housing Authority for administration of the Fostering Youth to Independence voucher program, which provides housing resources for individuals aging out of DCF care. The Site Director for the Cape and Islands DCF also sits on a Children's Behavioral Health Workgroup. A 0.8 FTE DCF Liaison position has been added to the region to work with YYA at risk of homelessness as they age out of services by providing stabilization supports and resources to maintain housing.

In 2019, BCDHS launched a Children's Behavioral Health Workgroup to identify gaps in services and resources and make a community plan to address those needs.

Staff from the Unaccompanied Homeless YYA grant partner agencies participated in a year long YYA Homelessness Training Institute to learn best practices and build capacity to effectively work with YYA experiencing housing instability. Topics for the Training Institute included YYA Homelessness 101, Adulthood, YYA Partnership, Positive Youth Development, Trauma Informed Care, Behavioral Health, Equity, Child Sexual Exploitation, YYA Housing Needs and Housing First.

5. Small social networks, stigma and a lack of awareness suppress identification, prevention and intervention.

Update

BCDHS and the State grant partners engaged key community stakeholders to build regional capacity to address YYA homelessness and disseminate information on services and resources with the goal of increasing awareness for identification, prevention and intervention. Community connections include:

Harbor Homes MV	Cape Cod Community College	Dukes County	Martha's Vineyard Hospital
DMH	DDS	DCF	Thrive
Duffy Health Center	Salvation Army	PIER Recovery Center	Faith Family Kitchen
Falmouth Human Services	Falmouth Housing Authority	Sandwich Housing Authority	Cape Cod YMCA
Outer Cape Healthcare	Lower Cape Outreach Council	Cape Cod Council of Churches	Mashpee Human Services
Cape Cod Family Table Collaborative	MassHire Career Counseling Center	Harbor Homes Winter Shelter Response	Falmouth Service Center
Cape and Islands Gay & Straight Youth Alliance	Barnstable County House of Corrections	Community Crisis Intervention Teams	Bay Cove Crisis Intervention Services
Cape and Islands CoC and Regional Network on Homelessness	Nauset Interfaith Association- Youth, Outreach, Hospitality	Belonging to Each Other (winter response in Falmouth)	Barnstable Recreation Dept. (local community center)
Systems of Care (inter-agency group focusing on YYA services led by JRI)	Police Departments - Barnstable, Yarmouth, Dennis, Orleans, Chatham, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, Falmouth, Harwich, Provincetown, and Sandwich	School systems - Nauset, Monomoy, Barnstable, Falmouth, Outer Cape Tech, Dennis-Yarmouth, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket	

There continue to be gaps in regional coverage, including for the following populations:

- YYA LGBTQ communities
- Mashpee-Wampanoag Tribe
- YYA with Limited English Proficiency
- YYA leaving the DCF and DYS systems
- YYA accessing or attempting to access DMH and DCF services

6. YYA voices are largely absent from decision making.

Update

In February of 2022, the community launched the Cape and Islands YAB. The YAB will have the opportunity to provide genuine youth voice on shaping the homelessness system for the region.

In March 2022 the Regional Network on Homelessness Policy Board approved a membership seat for a YAB representative as a full voting member.

7. Regional differences and similarities matter.

Update

The State Grant partners meet twice each month to address unique challenges as a group. The first is a Case Conferencing meeting to coordinate care for specific YYA and discuss ways staff have helped YYA to successfully identify and maintain stable housing and overcome barriers other agencies may be experiencing. The second meeting is a Community of Practice to expose partners to promising new strategies, discuss system level solutions, and share information peer to peer on community resources.

8. The Cape and Islands do not have a system designed to prevent and end YYA homelessness.

Update

The State grant has grown steadily since its launch on the Cape and Islands. In FY19, the first year of funding for the community, the total budget was \$228,162 for 2.05 FTE of staffing, serving 70 YYA

between January 1, 2019 and June 30, 2019. Three years later in FY22, the budget is \$542,841 for 4.6 FTE of staffing. We have already served 87 YYA (through March 30, 2022), including 26 YYA successfully moved into stable housing. Overall, the grant has supported 434 YYA, including 91 YYA successfully moved into stable housing.

The Network has a YAB, a preliminary strategy to prevent and end YYA homelessness (Network approval expected June 2022), an active YYA Committee, and several new policies designed to embed YYA expertise and experience into our homelessness response system (much of this is described above). We have made meaningful progress towards building a coordinated community response.

Recommendations

1. Create a YYA Workgroup within the Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness.

Update

The State Grant partners began meeting monthly in 2019 to engage in systems level regional planning and disseminate information from the local, state and federal levels. In September 2021, the Policy Board of the Network approved recognition of the YYA Homelessness Committee as a formal standing workgroup. In March and April 2022, the workgroup conducted two strategic planning sessions to set priorities for ending YYA Homelessness. Together with the YAB, they prioritized 16 actions under the following six objectives:

1. Improve overall system coordination and capacity to implement an effective coordinated community response to prevent and end YYA homelessness
2. Increase the capacity of the system to meet the needs of YYA who have high level needs
3. Add low barrier, safe, and affirming housing and shelter that comprehensively meets the needs of YYA with lived experience
4. Improve the ability of YYA experiencing homelessness to access resources across the CoC
5. Increase community awareness to reduce stigma, engender greater understanding and support, and increase identification and resource access.
6. Reduce the prevalence and impact of food insecurity among YYA experiencing homelessness and housing instability

These objectives and actions will guide the Committee's work over the next 6 to 12 months

2. Include YYA at risk of, and experiencing, homelessness in all assessment, planning, and implementation processes.

Update

The YAB started in early 2022. The purpose of the YAB is to develop a YYA-led peer support system and forum for YYA to learn about local systems to address housing instability, provide authentic YYA voice to decision-making, and affect real change. Developing a YAB will take time and requires that the community support it with resources, staff capacity, power, and patience. The Network will work to expand YYA voice in decision-making by including YYA in program monitoring, Coordinated Entry System design, CoC project selection, updates to Policies and Procedures and all other areas within the purvey of the CoC. The YAB are already a formal committee of the Network and have a seat on the Network Board.